
*Friends of the International Center,
at UC San Diego*



Newsletter

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June 2013

President's Message

As I approach "retirement" after two years as president of the Friends, let me muse on some of our accomplishments and challenges over that time. The hard work and dedication of so many Friends, and especially the members of my board, have made our accomplishments many:

- **It was a banner year** for scholarships! In 2012-13, under **Ruth Newmark**'s valiant leadership, we awarded \$75,000 to 57 students, including ever larger sums in matching funds from various campus offices. As always, our Scholarship Awards Dinner on May 21 is celebrated as the culmination of so many efforts over the course of the year. Special thanks to **Alma Coles** and her team for an outstanding event.

- **Two Ethnic Dinners** per year have netted more and more money for scholarships, and have served more and more guests. Handling 150 guests was unthinkable two years ago, but **Liz Fong Wills** never says no, and she delivers!

- **Our Resale Shop** has undergone a change in management with a new division of labor, but is continuing its longstanding tradition of serving campus and community, while serving as a model for recycling and sustainability, and raising funds for scholarships. Acknowledging these efforts, the **Friends Resale Shop** was honored in May with the Chancellor's Award for Organization of the Year 2013.

- **Our long-running** Cooking in America program has evolved into a new format—the monthly International Cooking Experience classes—with **Jenny Chin** and **Mary Woo** at the helm.

- **Another mainstay** among our activities, Wednesday Morning Coffee, continues to thrive under the leadership of **Georgina Sham** and her many helpers. **Nori Faer** carries on the long tradition of **Gus Lestick**'s weekly English language table.

For their work, **Nori** and **Mary Woo** were recognized as New Volunteers of the Year at the May Volunteer Appreciation Lunch.

- **Mommy /Daddy & Me**, now incorporated as a regular Wednesday morning activity, has also sustained a change of leadership, currently being coordinated by **Alice Blake-Stalker** and taught by **CJ Chen**. **CJ**'s contributions were cited in her Chancellor's Award as International Visitor of the Year.

- **For over a year now**, **Nancy Homeyer** has been collecting Friends volunteer hours to be recorded on the *Chancellor's Call to Service Volunteer 50* website. We are amazed and proud to learn that each month we contribute time equivalent to 4 to 5 fulltime employees!

Nancy was honored with the Chancellor's Award for Friends Member of the Year citing her many contributions to the work of the Friends, including her service as Recording Secretary and coordination of our very valuable International Family Orientation Program.

- **We have been delighted** to welcome **Kirk Simmons** as the new Dean of the International Center, and new member of the Friends. His strong support of our activities is very reassuring, and we look forward to our continued collaboration.

- **Last but not least**, I am thrilled to hand over the presidential reins to **Katya Newmark**, and her outstanding team. Several members who are new to the board will be bringing fresh ideas and insights to our organization. They will face ongoing challenges, including membership growth, parking costs, continuing leadership, but...

Friends of the International Center has been dedicated to its important mission and engaged in its valued programs for more than 50 years. With the ever growing global reach of our campus, it is still the person-to-person interaction that we provide that is so necessary, and works! Thanks to all of you!

Joan Adamo

Volunteer Appreciation Lunch

—by Ruth Newmark

The envelope presented to honored guests at the third annual International Center Volunteer Appreciation Lunch, held on May 2 on the International Center patio, contained two tickets to the Mingei International Museum of folk art, craft, and design and a note that reads: "We appreciate all you do for our international students, scholars, and their families. Thank you for giving so generously of your time to the Center. You're a valued member of our UC San Diego International Center Community!" It was signed by the International Center leadership team: **Kirk Simmons, Dulce Dorado, Roark Miller, Kelly O'Sullivan, and Sarah Ross.**

It was a beautiful event. The sun was shining, the temperature was a comfortable 70 degrees, and as Resale Shop volunteer **Joe Nichols** described the occasion: "A great luncheon. Good friends and great food." The Greek-style meal was prepared by **Bekker's Catering**, and the dessert—squares of delicious homemade baklava—was baked by no other than our own **Alma Coles. The Beats**, a co-ed a capella student group, charmed us with their performance.

The event was organized by **Shelly Taskin**, IC's Program Coordinator, and was attended by about 110 guests. In the absence of Dean Simmons, who was ill, Shelly and Sarah Ross presented the Chancellor's International Center Outstanding Volunteer Awards of the Year 2012-13. Here follow brief descriptions of the recipients with accompanying photos by **Carol Smith** and **Martin Lahtov.**

•FRIENDS MEMBER OF THE YEAR:

Nancy Homeyer

Nancy Homeyer came to the International Center through the former Host Family program, which she and her husband, **Bill**, helped coordinate, and for which they were recognized in 2003 as Host Family of the Year. For the last three years, Nancy has been active on the Friends board, ably serving as Recording Secretary and, more recently, tracking Friends volunteer hours at the Center. Her records reveal an average of



Bill and Nancy Homeyer

4 to 5 fulltime equivalents each month. April was a particularly busy month, when Friends amassed 1,221 hours volunteered! That represents very close to 7 FTEs, 6.94 to be exact.

Nancy also coordinates the International Family Orientation Program, which serves newly-arrived dependents by acquainting them with activities and services at the Center and in the community.

•ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR:

Friends Resale Shop

For more than 30 years, the **Friends Resale Shop** has been receiving donated items and reselling them on the UC San Diego campus. This fundraising has produced close to \$20,000 per year for the Friends scholarship program and organization expenses.



Joe Nichols, Alma Coles, Renate Schmid-Schoenbein with Sarah Ross

Every year, dedicated Friends members, UCSD students, international visitors, and community volunteers have offered their time and energy to running this program. Each day of the workweek, there are four or five people to assist shoppers and sort merchandise for the store. Some of the regulars have been offering continuing service for years on end. The exact number of volunteers in this organization fluctuates, but there are at least 20 in any given year. This year, there has been no individual manager for the whole project, although **Jeri Abernathy, Eleanor tum Suden, and Alma Coles** have assumed major managerial roles. Every team member has had to take on more responsibility for training, stocking, and cleaning the Shop. Together they have done a remarkable job of keeping things going and providing revenue for the Friends.

•NEW VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR:

Nori Faer and Mary Woo

Nori Faer joined the Friends of the International Center after volunteering at Wednesday Coffee, and

was quickly recruited to serve on the board as Corresponding Secretary. Next year she will serve in the role of Recording Secretary. But her heart remains at Wednesday Morning Coffee, where she carries on the 42-year tradition of recently retired **Gus Lestick** by hosting the English conversation table. Nori brings new ideas and enthusiasm, thus reinvigorating this weekly opportunity for international visitors to engage in casual English conversation.

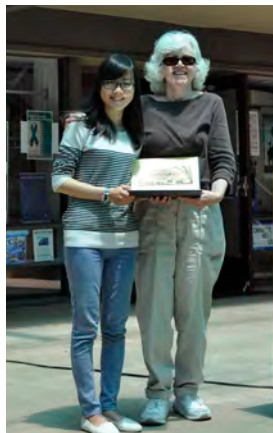
Serving on the Friends board as a member-at-large this year, **Mary Woo** is always ready with sleeves rolled up, whenever extra help is needed. She has been volunteering at Wednesday Morning Coffee, where she has taught many crafts, including knitting, crocheting, and sewing, and also helps out at the Knit-Along group on Tuesday afternoons. She is a very good cook and can be depended on to help at the International Kitchens and Ethnic Dinners. When **Barbara Starkey** retired as Cooking in America coordinator and main chef, Mary started an International Cooking Experience class with **Jennie Chin**, which meets once a month.



Mary Woo, Jennie Chin, Nori Faer, and Kristine Kneib

•**INTERNATIONAL VISITOR OF THE YEAR:**
Chun-Ju Chen

Chun-Ju Chen, better known to us as CJ, came to San Diego from Taiwan to study for her Master's Degree at San Diego State University in the Childhood Development Program. This semester, she has worked 10 hours a week with toddlers at the SDSU Children's Center. Although she already has a busy life as an international



CJ Chen and
Alice Blake-Stalker

graduate student, and as the wife of a UCSD doctoral student, **Chun-Shu Wei** of the Bioengineering Department, she has nevertheless volunteered, since January, as the lead teacher in Wednesday Coffee's Mommy/Daddy & Me class. She came to the program at a time of transition, when the previous teacher returned home. Because of CJ's dedication and hard work, the Mommy/Daddy & Me class not only survived, but also thrived.

Under CJ's leadership, the international parents who participate have formed lasting friendships; their children have learned English words for colors, numbers, and body parts; and the parents are sharing ownership of the class and taking turns as Volunteer Mom or Volunteer Dad.

Also honored were:

•**ENGLISH-IN-ACTION TUTOR OF THE YEAR:**
Christina Kim

•**STUDY ABROAD RETURNEE OF THE YEAR:**
Risa Farrell

•**I-CLUB MEMBER OF THE YEAR:**
Annemarie Catanzaro

Surely voicing the sentiments of other volunteers, **Kristine Kneib** wrote the International Center staff: "Thank you so much for such a delightful celebration to which you treated all us volunteers today. The weather was perfect, the luncheon was delicious and served in style, and the awards and entertainment were all very heart warming. Most of all, everyone's smiles and good spirit and friendship are so precious. It was so nice to meet volunteers I had not met before, and to be able to chat leisurely with fellow volunteers. I did feel a bit 'naked' not bustling around as usual, but it was a joyful luxury!"

Resale Shop Profile: Josie Foulks

—by Joe Nichols

One of our more recent Resale Shop volunteers is a longtime *amiga* of the Friends, **Josie Foulks**, whose association dates back to the sixties, when she had children in our International Cooperative Nursery School.

Josie attended teachers college in Chihuahua, Mexico and came to the U.S. around 50 years ago. In 1969, she founded UCSD's Early Childhood Education Center, serving for decades as its Director. She recalls starting the program with 22 children and ending with 200 students attending the school. Many graduates of the program were the sons and daughters of faculty members, staff, and members of the Friends.

Josie has been volunteering in the Resale Shop for two years, following her retirement. She loves working with her *compadres* at the Shop. She is energized by the students and other folks that come in. She has opened the Shop early, so that many of UCSD's Spanish-speaking workers can shop during their 9 a.m. break. This has rewarded the Shop with many extra dollars for scholarships. Her effervescent personality makes her a valuable volunteer at the Friends Resale Shop. Thanks, *gracias* Josie!

Scholarship Gifts

Treasurer **Jeri Abernathy** is delighted to be able to report substantial donations to the Friends Scholarship Fund. Contributions came from **Barbara** and **Jeri Fitzsimmons**, who once again contributed generously to a scholarship named in memory of Jeri's mother, **Nan Kehoe Fitzsimmons**; from **Gail Fliesbach** who contributed handsomely to the **Teclé Kidane-Mariam** Scholarship; and from **Alma** and **Bill Coles**, who continue to make contributions, in April making a significant gift to the **Ruth Newmark** Scholarship designating it "in honor of Ruth and in memory of her sister, **Eva Weissman**."

In addition, Friends received a donation from **Doraine Offerman**, who always accompanies her check with a personal note, writing this time: "The donation is in honor of **Therese Tanalski**, with a thank-you, because she insisted that I join the Friends. The monthly *Newsletter*

is my favorite reading! It is a joy to read the scholarship recipients' letters. They are confirmation of the great job the committee does in their selections!"

Besides these personal gifts, Friends acknowledge the valuable contributions to our Scholarship Fund from UCSD's **Office of Graduate Studies, Student Affairs, the School of Medicine, the Financial Aid Office**, and the systemwide office of the **UC Education Abroad Program**.

With the help of many—most importantly our **Resale Shop** and **Ethnic Dinner** volunteers—Friends were able to award 57 scholarships for a total value of \$75,000 during the academic year 2012-13, no doubt due to the fine collaboration between volunteers and staff in support of our campus international community.

Wrote **Soracha Thamphiwatana** from Thailand, a Ph.D. candidate

in Nanoengineering: "By awarding me the Friends Scholarship, you have lightened my financial burden, which allows me to focus more on my research. Your generosity has inspired me to help students achieve their goal just as you have helped me."

And from **Ann Klein**, Director of the Financial Aid Office we heard: "We know what wonderful work the Friends accomplish in supporting students who study abroad, and we welcome the opportunity to partner with you this year. Thank you again for all that you do! We are deeply grateful."

June and Summer Calendar

June 4, 11, 18, 25: **Knit-Along**, 1:00-3:30. Will resume after Labor Day.

June 5, 19: **Family Orientation**, 9:15. Orientations continue on 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month.

June 5, 12, 19, 26: **Wednesday Morning Coffee**, 10:00-Noon. Will continue to meet through the summer.

June 13: **International Cooking Experience**, 9:30-1:00. No meeting in July and August.

June 14: **Spring Quarter** ends. **Resale Shop** will close until Tuesday, July 9. Summer hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs.: 10:00-1:00

June 19: **International Kitchen Potluck**, Noon. Will resume in October.

June 26: **Board Retreat**



Family Orientation

Nancy Homeyer, Family Orientation program chair, reports that using the Conference Room at the International Scholar Office (ISO), across the street from the International Center, continues to work well. **Arline Paa**, who attended one of the sessions, was so impressed that she sent this photo.

Wednesday Morning Coffee

It may be surprising that Wednesday Coffee activities are not limited to Wednesday (to wit: Tuesday afternoon's Knit-Alongs), or that they are not restricted to being held at the International Center.

One April morning, conversationalists at Gus's Table went on an exploration of 99 Ranch Market, a chain of supermarkets that features a staggering selection of Asian foods and cultural products. Organizer **Nori Faer** described the outing as follows:

"Our intention was to have a role reversal when the conversation table participants and discussion leaders made a field trip to 99 Ranch Market. This proved to be true as we walked through the produce department and were given instructions on how to use the various exotic vegetables and fruits. **Lijie Zhang** talked about how to eat lotus root, how to prepare it, and what it tastes like. We all examined the ginger, wondering if it was the mild spring ginger we had just read about, but decided that it was just young ginger.

"I was eager to find and buy durian, a fruit grown in some countries of the Far East that is purported to smell like a dead and rotting animal, but with a pleasant taste and a texture like pudding. **Letty Ponomareff** was the first to spy the durian and called me over. We all huddled over a case of durian, while I selected one for us to try on the following Wednesday when we met over coffee.

"Next we filed into the fresh fish section where Letty was looking for a bass to buy for that night's dinner. A man standing next to our group gave all of us instructions on how to tell if a fish is fresh. (Take tongs and look under the gills. The flesh should be red underneath. Also the eyes should be clear and not sunken.)

"With time running short we checked out the rice department,

where we found a dizzying array of choices. Several of our participants showed us the differences between the various types, including sweet rice that is called sticky rice in many recipes."

The group later joined other Wednesday Coffee participants for lunch at one of the many Korean restaurants in Kearny Mesa. Asked about the lunch, **Jennie Chin** replied: "For the second year in a row, **Lily Song** has been kind enough to open her restaurant to Friends. This year, in her newly renovated and renamed Roadem BBQ, for \$10.00 per person, the 23 guests enjoyed an incredible sampling of marinated beef, pork, and chicken, along with several accompanying Korean-style appetizers. Many thanks to **Alice Blake-Stalker** for organizing this event and getting us together."

Resuming her account of the trip to the Asian market, Nori Faer revealed: "A week later, we discussed our adventure and **Se Jin Kim**, one of our participants, weighed in on it: 'It was my first time at 99 Ranch. It is a Chinese market and I'm Korean, so there are many strange things there. There were a few Korean things. I was happy to see they were selling corn, which I bought and cooked at home. It was delicious!'

"After sharing our impressions of the market, the group got to try the durian. With great trepidation I cut it open while holding my nose for fear of fainting. We all peered at it and sniffed. Nothing. Just a slight smell of melon. **Dave Friedenberg** (a retired attorney with the California Office of the Attorney General and the newest volunteer at the



Lunch at Roadem BBQ

conversation table) suggested that it might need to warm up since it had been refrigerated. We gave it several minutes, and then one by one we spooned small amounts of it into our mouths. These were some of the comments:

Soo: 'It feels like soft cheese and tastes like melon.'

Lili (the only one familiar with durian): 'The smell is bad, but in your mouth it tastes like chocolate.'

Letty: 'It's sinewy, stringy.'

Dave: 'It smells like gas.'

"And so we all agreed not to agree on our individual durian experience. But we did agree on one thing—our day out at Ranch 99 Market was a fun time."

Wednesday Coffee will continue to welcome participants throughout the summer. Summarizing recent events, the program's coordinator, **Georgina Sham**, has this to say: "Most of the activities were great. Wonderful volunteers, great participation, lots of kudos all around. Nice thing is that more and more participants come forward and volunteer to lead a craft session, or do a lunch, or ...!"

Friends and **Oceanids** will again join forces in hosting our annual 4th of July celebration. As the time nears, please check the Friends website and/or our bulletin board in the International Center dining room for details.



Resale Shop volunteers being honored at the International Center Volunteer Appreciation Lunch, with Alma Coles holding the Chancellor's Award certificate

Our Friends Resale Shop Is a Winner!

—by *Alma Coles*

Volunteers at the Resale Shop have much to be proud of, not the least receiving the 2012-13 Organization of the Year Chancellor's Award, which is on display in the Resale Shop.

We again have met our \$ goal to receive matching funds for our Friends scholarship program. We have managed to keep the Shop thriving. We have welcomed several new volunteers; however, we are still looking for supplemental volunteers to staff the Shop, both for this summer and the academic year. We are also looking for sub-

stitutes for vacationers and for personal emergencies, so please help by sharing three hours a week with us.

The rewards of volunteering at the Shop are many; let me single out a few: meeting and greeting new visitors to the U.S., assisting with language skills, offering a warm, caring environment for staff, students, visitors, and faculty—and it's fun!

This is an opportunity to say thanks to all of you who donate to the Shop, but most importantly to **Patti Alksne**, who for years has

passed on to us wonderful items from her Second Act West consignment store in La Jolla.

If you have questions or want to join us in our valuable recycling and fundraising efforts, e-mail acoles@ece.ucsd.edu or call me, **Alma Coles**, at 453-8813. Better yet, come to a meeting of regular and prospective volunteers to be held at my home on Monday, June 10, at 10:00 a.m. The Shop will be closed for the morning shift.

Starting July 9, our Resale Shop summer hours will be: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Membership

Friends are pleased to welcome **Karen & Thomas Davis** to our membership, doubly pleased because Karen is a new board member and will take the position as Treasurer. Karen is an accountant by profession and a friend of **Katya Newmark**, our new President.

We regret to report the death of Dr. **Shunichi Usami**, born in

1924 in Japan, where he received both his M.D. and his Ph.D. in Physiology from Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine. His wife, **Tazuko**, perhaps best known to us for her creations of exquisite Japanese dolls, was an active participant in our Wednesday Coffee program until the couple moved to New Jersey upon the retirement of Dr. Usami from the Department of Bioengineering, but not before

making a donation of a bench to the International Center. We extend our condolence to the Usami family.

At press time, we learned of the death of **David Crowne**, Ass. Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature. We offer our love and sympathy to his wife, **Georgia Crowne**, a loyal volunteer in our Resale Shop, and to her daughter, **Amanda Shutts**.

SCHOLARSHIP LETTERS

A Semester in Beijing

After living in a foreign country for six months, maintaining a vegetarian diet, planning a seventeen-day trip for eight around central China, enduring an accidental 36-hour train ride, taking 30 quarter units in one semester, and learning how to navigate a very different society, I did not think that the most difficult part about my study-abroad experience would be coming home! Studying abroad in China was hands down the best decision I made in my college career, because it offered me the chance to really make the most of my education. As a Chinese Studies major who had never been to China, I was able to soak in the culture. Chatting with the locals, observing the unspoken rules firsthand, and learning through everyday interactions really weaved together academic knowledge and personal experience.

Though it was drastically different from my prior experiences, I really enjoyed my study at Beijing Normal University. Unlike UCSD, which is somewhat isolated, BNU is situated right near the heart of Beijing and it was hard to figure out where the campus started and city ended. Little hole-in-the-wall shops occupied the area next to my dorm, adding a hint of street market feel. The dining halls opened promptly at 11 a.m., serving food to massive crowds of students with military-like efficiency. Instead of large lecture halls where the professors seemed very far away, my classes were intimate and the teachers knew us on a personal level. The classes were challenging in that everything was conducted in Mandarin, but I became much more confident communicating as we progressed. All of my classmates were from around the world, and hearing about their experiences, worldviews,

and how they came to be in China was very interesting.

Even though I spent time on my studies, academics did not stop me from exploring and enjoying Beijing. After acquiring a subway card, on weekdays I was able to grab a bite from a restaurant well rated on the Chinese equivalent of Yelp, and trek to further attractions or neighboring cities over the weekend. I visited countless temples, palaces, and *hutongs*, [narrow alleyways characteristic of old Beijing], and discovered a new love for Karaoke, going fourteen times during my trip. My favorite place to relax was Houhai, a lake with willows and lotus near my university that was both beautiful and had character. Surrounded by little souvenir shops, food stalls, and bars with live bands, Houhai buzzed with life. Beijingers go there to eat, dance, and check out the eclectic variety of street performers; couples go for a romantic paddle on the lake and a view of the night lights; the elderly go there to exercise, fly their mini-kites, and play chess. As for me, I just enjoyed walking along the lake, listening to music, and taking everything in. In China, not a single week passed without some new adventure or discovery, and I loved that feeling of limitless opportunity.

I also took full advantage of the opportunity to travel outside of Beijing, and experienced the diversity that characterizes China. From enjoying the fanciest of accommodations in cities like Shanghai and Chengdu to exploring a quaint Tibetan village and the grasslands of Inner Mongolia living in a yurt (where nature was the only bathroom), I was exposed to a range of lifestyles that reshaped an understanding of my



own lifestyle. Studying abroad gave me a lot of opportunities that I did not have before, such as seeing the terracotta warriors, exploring the city where Chinese writing originated, visiting Confucius' hometown, seeing baby pandas, and more. I am particularly happy that I was able to toboggan down the Great Wall (twice), and attend a concert of **Wang Lee-hom**, a Taiwanese-American singer, whom I have admired for years. Even though my six-month study abroad trip in Beijing is now over, I still have thousands of pictures to remind me of one of the best collection of experiences of my life.

Veronica Lin

Thailand

It has been five months since my return from my journey through Thailand, which has given me ample time to ponder and reflect over the wonderful experience I had. First of all, I cannot ever express my feelings of gratitude to the Friends of the International Center for making this opportunity even a possibility for me. Having said that, I do believe that I took full advantage of my semester abroad, and am excited to share with you all the personal revelations that took place during those five adventurous months.

In terms of culture, community and history, Thailand was a poetic

wonder. When I first stepped off of the plane, I'll admit that I was completely out of my element. I was disoriented by the language barrier, overwhelmed by the chaos of Bangkok traffic, hesitant to try the street foods in front of my apartment. However, aided by the cultural course I took at my exchange university, Thammasat, it was not long before I grew to understand how welcoming and un-intimidating a land I was actually in. I became accustomed to pressing my palms together in a traditional Thai gesture of respect, called the *wai*, to greet my professors and local elders. Simple conversations with taxi drivers and street vendors still yield some of my fondest memories. Roaming about the streets of Bangkok alone, one could be walking in a broken, run-down neighborhood, and just around the corner find herself in a majestically constructed temple. The heat alone was an experience in itself, and the friends I made would often giggle at my sweaty forehead and drenched shirts after rushing to class. All of those seemingly mundane interactions felt indescribably profound to me, considering I had not too long before been lost without a rudder in a strange new place.

Being a student of political science, one of the most interesting observations made about Thailand is the drastic divide between the conservative and progressive cultures of the country. Once I began making Thai friends in my classes, I started to learn of their perspectives on the ideological changes that are bubbling amongst the younger generation in the country. While pictures of **King Bhumibol** are blasted all across the nation, there is also a growing dissatisfaction concerning the monarch, spurring protests and terrorism, as I could witness throughout the duration of my time there. However, while traveling outside of Bangkok, I realized that loyalists are still very present and in complete awe of the king who has caused so much political turmoil. I witnessed entire home shrines dedicated to the royal family.

I also participated in an internship with a non-governmental organization called the Sustainable Development Foundation, Thailand. In this internship, I was required to travel to islands in Southern Thailand, where I assisted in field research concerning the livelihoods of fisher folk communities that are at risk. Many of these communities are fighting battles for land rights, and have been heavily impacted by the tsunamis of 2008. Marginalized and neglected, these people have few options, and talking to them gave me a great appreciation for NGOs just like SDF that fight for issues like these.

Hands down my favorite daily activity in Thailand was going to Muay Thai practice at the university's boxing gym. I have practiced Taekwondo since the days when I could barely walk, so I would undoubtedly cite martial arts as a forte of mine. Therefore, finding a place where I could meet friends who could teach me a new discipline was crucial to my experience there. The club members that I met there were so wonderful, and the love that I still feel towards them is beyond words. I now know that, if I ever were to return to Thailand, I would have friends waiting for me who would be excited to reunite.

Alexa Rocero

Drumming

When I first arrived at Osaka University, I found out that the campus did not have a taiko group. This greatly disappointed me, since I had chosen Japan as the destination of my study abroad because I wanted to gain more knowledge about the art of Japanese drumming. I had little to no Japanese language skills, which initially deterred me from searching and asking about taiko any further. However, as days went by, I could not get it off my mind that I was not experiencing taiko at its original birthplace, so with help of friends who are fluent in Japanese, I finally found the perfect taiko group.

Other taiko groups had told me



that they did not take in foreigners, because no one in their group could speak English, but this group was excited to accept me even though they also did not have any English-speaking members. My first day was truly memorable. Before then, I had never had to rely on body language alone to communicate because I did not know the language. However, the members of Yu Taiko were warm and welcoming, and they made me feel at ease. They accepted me with open arms and trained me in their art of taiko. We had a common passion for taiko.

I learned the original songs and styles of Yu Taiko, but also was able to share with them what I had learned in Asayake Taiko at UCSD. I grew significantly as a taiko player, and learned much about Japanese culture and language by spending time with the members outside of practice. By the end of my program, I understood what they said in Japanese and they understood what I said in English.

Since my return from Japan, I am trying to spread what I learned from Yu Taiko—not just the drumming but also the camaraderie and teamwork. Drumming in unison and in perfect harmony stems from mutual trust and concentration by each member.

My time abroad has been a life changing experience. Yu Taiko was just a small part of my schedule in Japan, but it has impacted me significantly. I wish to share my study-abroad experience with others to influence them to partake in this unique and rewarding journey.

Seo Jin Park

The Role of Communal Land in Mexico

Thanks to the support of the Friends of the International Center Scholarship, I completed a month of preliminary field research from early August to early September. My research took place in the town of Tlalchihualica (or Tlalchi), Hidalgo, a Nahuatl town of around 2,000 people.



My research explored how the privatization of previously communally held land in the form of an *ejido* is changing community relations. In the field, I looked at this from the angle of changes to farming. By following farmers to their farming plots and talking to community members at large, I found that only a handful of men continue to farm. Instead, most men and women, spanning young to middle age, rely on temporary work in industrial agriculture farms in other states. The people I interviewed commented that farming is not profitable. Those that farm sell their corn mostly within the community, to the majority of the town that does not farm, yet values locally grown corn over cheap corn imported from the U.S. Other products such as oranges are grown to make a very limited profit, given the low prices offered to Tlalchi producers by intermediaries who sell these in distant markets.

Through my interviews I also found that notions of improvement are occurring through both communal and individual entrepreneurial efforts. However, both of these hang tenuously. Many community members commented that the municipal government refuses to fund agricultural projects or public works at the community/*ejido* level. There is also a

reticence to fund projects submitted by individuals. Municipal support for agriculture is limited to the distribution of a few putatively profitable fruit plants and tree saplings that people are encouraged to grow and sell individually. These ventures often do not take off. I saw many of these plants lying in residents' patios, unplanted. One pair of interviewees, however, a pair of brothers, has invested in this type of project. Having combined their parcels of land, the pair is growing Hass avocados and Asian jackfruit, both nonlocal, at a large scale by community standards. What has capped their ambitions is the slew of bureaucratic barriers that prevents them from installing irrigation on their land. This project also concentrated the pair's earnings from previous migration to the U.S. Since most people in Tlalchi do not migrate to the U.S., it is evident that projects at such a scale are out of reach for the majority of Tlalchi residents. Other individual ventures include setting up small stores, bars, and pharmacies, and, to a small degree, buying and selling farming or housing plots located in Tlalchi.

Given the municipal governments' consistent disregard for rural agriculture, the *ejido* as a body is engaging in entrepreneurial activities. One scheme is the sale of gravel from the riverbeds to cement companies. Since gravel is communally owned according to the agreement reached by the *ejido* at the time of legal proceedings for privatization, the community distributes the gains equally. According to members, unfair appropriation of funds by *ejido* authorities demand transparent accountability. Community members complained that the latest reports were overdue. Community confidence, therefore, in these collective ventures is tenuous.

A related phenomenon is the occurrence of sinkholes in nearby communities of the region. The sudden implosion of land and with it homes, community buildings, and fields has provoked Tlalchi residents to ponder

over these disasters. Though the results of scientific studies over these sinkholes is forthcoming, one of the local archeologists hypothesizes that such disasters are manmade, the result of unsustainable extraction of gravel from the riverbeds for sale to cement companies by both communities and individuals with private property rights to parts of the river all across the region. This archeologist posits that gravel extraction forces water to percolate underground, the accumulation of which results in a softening of the soil and ultimately in its implosion. I will continue to follow these occurrences to see if they may relate to an unsustainable entrepreneurial drive to make money from local resources in the absence of state support.

The last line of findings is the importance of migration for the sustenance of Tlalchihualicans. The majority of young and middle aged men and women work seasonally in industrial agriculture farms outside Hidalgo, and also migrate temporarily to cities within Mexico. Some Tlalchihualicans have permanently settled in cities. They support the economy of Tlalchihualica through their remittances and the support they offer to relatives who work in cities temporarily. Due to the enormous role migration plays in the sustenance of Tlalchi within the depressed state of small-scale agriculture, I have decided to make this the central focus of my research. Privatization of communal land (*ejidos*) is not so much resulting in Tlalchi residents selling their land as was feared. Most Tlalchi residents continue to reside in the *ejido*, supplementing their rural membership through temporary migration to the cities and industrial farms.

This preliminary field experience has directed me in a fruitful direction as I prepare to embark on a year of field research in the Huasteca region of Hidalgo.

Raquel Pacheco

With Gratitude

Receiving the Friends of the International Center **Fitzsimmons Scholarship** allowed me to remain at the University of California, San Diego.

I began my studies here in 2011 with funding from various private donors and the Australian government. This funding covered tuition and living expenses for the first two quarters of my study at UCSD; however, by Spring quarter I found myself faced with a funding gap that I was greatly struggling to close. Receiving your scholarship allowed me to close this gap, and to continue my studies at UCSD uninterrupted.

During this time, I continued my research into sound recording, audio editing, and contemporary clarinet performance. I was able to develop connections with musicians from all across America, and have had my work accepted at conferences and festivals in New York City, Athens (GA), San Francisco, Los Angeles, and many other places. Developing this network of contacts in the United States will continue to provide me with opportunities for years to come, and will help to support my professional post-college career. The opportunity to build and maintain this network has only been opened up to me since moving to the USA; it is simply something that is not possible to do from Australia. By allowing me to continue studying at UCSD, receiving this scholarship has placed me in a good position for future collaborative work and artistic endeavour.

Since receiving this award, I have gained employment as a TA, which has seen all my tuition expenses covered. I no longer have to worry about where my next quarters' funding will come from, which is a wonderful and secure feeling. I will always be grateful to the Friends of the International Center for helping me in my time of need.

Sam Dunscombe, Department of Music, DMA candidate

Paris

This year abroad has changed me in more ways than I can fully comprehend. I have learned so much, both in and outside the classroom. I have met and lived with people from every part of the globe. I have lived as a foreigner in a country that does not use my native language. This experience has been fundamentally different from anything I had known before. Before this trip I had never left the United States. Then one day I was simply in another world, a world which I had only seen in pictures and movies. The transition was hard, and not just because of the 15 hours of travel, but I got through it and am stronger for it.

There was a defining moment when I suddenly realized that I was no longer home. I had just gotten to Paris the night before. I was nine hours jet-lagged. I wanted to see and experience the city, so I started wandering the streets of Paris; simply taking in as much as I could. The streets were small and winding. Buildings were old and squished together. I made my way to the Seine, started to cross the Pont des Arts, and when I looked up, I saw the Eiffel Tower in the distance. It is a cliché, but I stopped dead in my tracks. This monument and icon, symbolizing Paris, was there, right in front of me, completely unexpected. The full impact of what I had done in the last 36 hours hit me all at once. There was no going back, only forward.

Since then I have had and continue to have many other experiences. All of which, continue to redefine my worldview and myself. After this, I intend to have many more trips abroad. I have had a taste and I love it.

Stephen Dailing



Daniel Vollmer sent a humorous account ("Hostel Life, or how I woke up to a strange man in my bed") of a night spent at a youth hostel in Bath with his housemates from his host university, the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. While it would provide a good laugh, as he hoped, it is far too long to reprint here. —Ed.

Business Venture in UK

My name is **Avi Kabani** and I attended the University of Sussex in Brighton, England. I took two different marketing courses for my business minor here at UC San Diego.

One memory that will stay with me forever is of a man by the name of **Neil Tomlinson**, who owns an eco-friendly business called AQUAPAX. He sells water bottles that have a special lining, making the bottles reusable. After he visited our class for a presentation, one of my classmates and I approached him. We talked about the product and how he wants to expand to the States. We told him that UC San Diego was a perfect environment for this type of product. After several meetings and long hours, we drew up a contract with him to test the market here on campus and in the greater San Diego area.

We spent much of the time abroad doing market research in and around Europe. We really wanted to make this study-abroad trip mean something, and by starting our own little business here while sustaining contacts internationally, we could engage ourselves on a completely different level than school can.

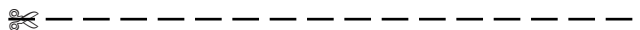
Dear Friends of the International Center,

My name is **Peter Jombik**, and I am an undergraduate student majoring in International Studies, with political science and sociology tracks, and regional specialization in Asia. I am a recipient of a Friends of the International Center Scholarship, and I want to express my deep gratitude to you for awarding me the scholarship.

While attending the University of Hong Kong, I took one sociology and two political science classes that dealt with the fundamentals of Hong Kong society, its governance and legacy. I learned that the cultural mix of Eastern and Western identities present in Hong Kong had contributed to the creation of Hong Kong's thriving society, and how Chinese Confucian work and family ethic had fused with a Western sense of individual freedom and human rights.

Through discussions with locals, I could tell for myself how people cherished hard work, family obligations, and civic engagement. I was fortunate to experience directly Hong Kong's vigorous but peaceful cultural spirit of civic engagement, being there during the biggest demonstration in recent times, aimed against the implementation of a new national education curriculum that was being imposed by communist China on free-minded Hong Kongnese. But I also came to understand that this Eastern-Western cultural mix was just one of many factors. Good governance, anchored in efficient public administration, a low degree of corruption, and solid rule of law had been the main institutional driving force behind Hong Kong's successful transformation. I experienced personally what such good governance meant anytime I had to deal with public institutions. Whether they were officials at airport customs or at the city's immigration department, they provided unbelievably good customer service and a very quick resolution of my matters.

My geography class on sustainable public transportation, and my own experience, showed me that a carefully planned multimodal transportation system that gives preference to public mass transport over private individual transport, especially when combined with economic, social, and environmental sustainability in mind, has served as the physical backbone of Hong Kong's transformation into a thriving society. Without actually living in Hong Kong, I would not have been able to comprehend and experience for myself all these issues.



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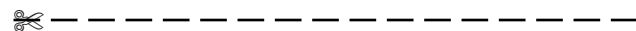
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